

Blue Balloons and Rabbit Ears. Poems by Hilda Offen (Troika Books)

An appealing collection for young children, illustrated by the poet. Full of fun and rhyme and rhythm and a variety of verse forms, whether it's a conversation about a naughty girl called Sally McDuff or a meditation on the miseries of being a goalkeeper. It includes thoughtful themes about nature and history too. You can travel back in time to a life in a long ago age by handling an ancient axe head or imagine yourself shrunk to a tiny size and crawling around under a forest canopy of kale.

This collection was shortlisted for the 2015 CLPE Poetry Award.

Overall aims of this teaching sequence.

- To develop pleasure in reading, motivation to read, vocabulary and understanding through listening to, discussing and expressing views about poems.
- To build a repertoire and appreciation of a wide range of poetry, making links with personal experiences.
- To develop inferential response to poetry through discussion, performance, role play, improvisation and debate.
- To clarify word meanings and understanding of poetic language and devices through recital and performance.
- To develop spoken language and understanding through visualising, artwork, drama and dance.
- To develop positive attitudes to writing by composing, editing and performing poetry.

This teaching sequence is designed for a Year 1 or 2 class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.

This teaching sequence is approximately 2 weeks long if spread out over 10 sessions and divided into two themes: 'Introducing the Collection' and 'Wild Imaginations'. This is a rich, 'ear-catching' and sometimes humorous collection of poetry with which children will be able to relate in terms of personal and emotional experiences. There is much vivid imagery to explore and inspire creative response and interesting use of language to play around with and extend interest in the meaning of words. There is much opportunity in this collection for children to explore and revel in Hilda Offen's stunning use of poetic devices such as: assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia. The style of such poetry offers inspiration to young budding poets, supporting the development of their own creative and poetry writing. This teaching sequence can be adapted to suit older children; they may benefit

from their wider experience of the world and in being able to focus on some of the devices and forms that the poet draws on in this wide-ranging collection.

Teaching Approaches:

- Reading aloud and re-reading
- Shared reading
- Word collections
- Responding to illustration
- Book talk - responding to poetry
- Role play
- Visualising
- Drawing and annotating
- Poetry Box
- Performing poetry
- Shared writing

Outcomes:

- Experience and appreciation of a wider range of poetry through the compilation of anthologies;
- Understanding and appreciation of the use of language and vocabulary by creating word and phrase collections;
- Deeper understanding of meanings and poet's intent through performance of poems;
- Mastery of language in pieces of descriptive writing;
- Understanding of poetic devices and structure and seeing oneself as a poet by composing poems inspired by the collection.

Developing Phonological Awareness:

- Discriminating environmental sounds;
- Onomatopoeia;
- Exploring voice sounds;
- Exploring instrumental sounds;
- Keeping and following a rhythm;
- Identifying rhyming words;
- Onset and rime;
- Syllabification.

Exploring Vocabulary and Language Structure:

- Generate vocabulary experientially;
- Drawing to describe and think;
- Explore onomatopoeia;
- Identify rhyming words;
- Joining in with predictable patterned phrases.

Cross Curricular Links:

Much of the cross-curricular work in this sequence engages children in exploring the language and vocabulary necessary to be able to both access and compose poetry.

Science:

- Children are encouraged to explore the natural environment throughout the year to investigate and answer questions about plants growing in their habitat. Where possible, they should observe the growth of flowers that they have planted.
- Children can make close observations of wild and garden flowering plants, using simple equipment. They can identify and name the basic structure of a variety of common flowering plants.

Geography:

- Use basic geographical vocabulary to refer to physical and human features in the local area that a balloon might pass.
- Use aerial photographs to recognise landmarks and basic human and physical features of the local environment; devise simple maps to support language development, sequencing and poetry composition.

Art:

- Children use drawing and painting to develop and share their ideas, experiences and imagination in response to poetry.
- Children can develop illustrative techniques in using colour, pattern, texture, line, shape, form and space using watercolour, pen and ink, chalks and charcoal.

Design:

- Children can support their understanding and communication by designing and making models of Nasturtiums and other plants, selecting from a range of carefully considered materials; perhaps create an increasingly green classroom.

Music:

- Children use their voices expressively and creatively by speaking chants and rhymes in reading poetry and in performing.
- When rehearsing poetry recitals and performances, children could be encouraged to experiment with, create, select and combine sounds using the inter-related dimensions of music.

P.E.

- Children can rehearse and perform a dance in role as the Nasturtium dinosaurs, using simple movement patterns.

Links to other books and resources:

There are so many anthologies and collections that are inspired by childhood experiences and will provide the children with a broad range of poetry to listen to, read aloud and perform, as well as enabling children to choose poems when creating their own anthologies on given themes.

- *The Puffin Book of Fantastic First Poems* edited by June Crebbin. Puffin 2000
- *The Dragon with a Big Nose* by Kathy Henderson. Frances Lincoln 2013
- *All the Best. The Selected Poems* by Roger McGough. Puffin 2004 (*Poetryline*)
- ‘*Caribbean Playground Song*’ read by James Berry (*Poetryline*)
- ‘*Dog in the Playground*’ read by Allan Ahlberg (*Poetryline*) from his *Collected Poems* Puffin 2008
- ‘*Everybody’s Got a Gift*’ by Grace Nichols (*Poetryline*)

Other books by Hilda Offen:

- *Scared of a Bear*. Hodder 1996
- *Rita the Rescuer Collection*. Catnip 2012
- *Digging in the Dark*. Catnip 2012

Resources to support work around the collection:

- Google maps: www.google.co.uk/maps
- *The Blue Balloon* by Mick Inkpen. Hodder 1993
- *Tin* by Chris Judge. Andersen Press 2014
- A clip (30:00-34:00) from the film 'The Red Balloon' (1956):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2Y1tRBOXfA>
- *Oliver Who Would Not Sleep* by Mara Bergman and Nick Maland. Hodder 2007
- *Stomp, Chomp, Big Roars. Here come the Dinosaurs* by Kaye Umansky and Nick Sharratt. Puffin 2006
- *Little Guide to Wild Flowers* by Charlotte Voake. Eden Project 2007
- The Woodland Trust's Nature Detectives:
http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/download/cards_flowers.htm.
- Time-lapse footage of plants unfolding and growing from which they can take inspiration:
 - Nasturtiums: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ehy41Nm7WQU>
 - Various plants: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzxM4E5I_sc
 - Climbing bean: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2RuVxdr0mA>
 - Fern: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c9Zi3WfVRc>

Links to other resources on the Poetryline Website:

- Watch Hilda Offen perform her own poems from the collection.
- Look up poets by age range or themes, enabling you to access a wide range of poetry to inspire budding poets.

Before beginning this book:

One of the best ways of involving poetry is to make a habit of reading aloud to them as often as possible from a wide range of books and anthologies. This experience of being read to is likely to be the real foundation of their knowledge of poetry and is also going to be a major influence on how they write themselves. Children will benefit from being immersed in a wide range of poetry; routinely listening to poems read aloud, sharing enjoyment by joining in, revisiting and playing with language, and deepening understanding by performing poems.

Invite parents to read or tell poems and to talk about them afterwards, enriching and enlarging the children's experiences of poetry; poems that speak of their personal experiences, home lives and heritage as well as those that increase their understanding of the wider world.

Engage the enthusiasm of a wider audience by creating poetry area in which members of the school community can display their favourite poem, recommending it to others alongside poetry books, poem cards, rhymes and posters. Compile and present anthology of these poems with the children to be revisited and enjoyed; in printed form or as an audio recording, perhaps to be distributed in some way. Find photographs of some of the poets; laminate them and display them alongside their work. Make a listening corner in which children can listen to CDs or tapes of poems. Some of these could be made by the children themselves or recorded 'live' during class read aloud times. It would also be nice to invite parents in to record some of the poems; these could also be translated into home languages for bilingual children to enjoy. You might raise the profile of poetry by asking the children to create

illustrated poetry posters which present poetry or publicise a school poetry event in which poetry is shared through drama, performance or reading aloud. Make a class collection of poetry books; collections by the same author and anthologies, planning in regular browsing and independent reading time when the children can access the books.

Become familiar with CLPE's Poetryline website as well as those belonging to the poets themselves and other sites that enable the children to watch the poet reading their own poems, bringing them alive. Through hearing poetry read aloud and told in a variety of languages, regional accents and styles, the children will be inspired to find their own voices and to express themselves in poems of their own.

Teaching Sessions:

Part 1 – Introduction to the collection: Blue Balloons and Rabbit Ears

Introducing the book: reading aloud, sharing and discussing poems

This is a rich collection of poetry, playing with language in interesting ways and demanding to be read aloud, lifting the words off the page and bringing the poems alive for the children. Reading aloud slows written language down so that children can hear and absorb the words, tunes and patterns. It enables children to experience and enjoy stories they might otherwise not meet, enlarging their reading interests and providing access to texts beyond their level of independence as readers. By listening to the poems read aloud, the children will be able to tune into memorable words and phrases and the distinctive patterns of the language in poetry, enabling them to join in and share the enjoyment of reading aloud communally. As children become more familiar with poetry, they will begin to regard it as something that they can engage in themselves as readers or writers.

- Browse through the book with the children, chatting together about Hilda Offen's illustrations and reading aloud any poems that you or they would like to explore. Encourage them to talk a little about their first responses to the illustration, title and the poem itself:
 - *Why did you choose this poem?*
 - *What did you like about this poem?*
 - *What did it make you think of?*
- Many of the poems can be related to your children's sense of humour, personal experiences or of their emerging knowledge of the world; others may be quite demanding and require additional provision - or even life experience - in order to enable them to tap into the vocabulary, language and themes. Children may still express a preference for poems that are beyond their life experience because they find an aspect of the poem particularly enjoyable, such as the play on words or sound or the use of poetic device.
- Re-read the poems, encouraging the children to join in if they wish. Discuss which words or phrases were most memorable or those that encouraged them to start joining in. Discuss what is special about these words or phrases; whether they are known or unfamiliar.

- Invite children to choose a favourite poem from the book each day to read aloud and pin up as the 'poem of the day.' Talk together about how it makes them feel and what in particular they like about it.
- Are there any words or sounds that they enjoy particularly?
- Collect what the children say on prepared speech bubbles and pin these up alongside the poem.

Poetry appreciation: compiling an anthology of favourite poems

- Prepare a Big Book Class poetry journal, ready to collect into it some of the class's favourite poems from the book. Leave room beside each one where you can to scribe some of what the children say as you talk together about individual poems. Encourage children to add their own individual responses later using drawing or writing.
- The poems could be recorded to create an audio collection so that the children can listen to the poems independently, perhaps whilst tuning into the printed pages and looking at the illustrations. Children could take these recordings home to share and enjoy with family members.
- Begin to put together a collection of favourite poems from the book. Choose three or four poems to make into poetry cards, scanning and laminating them so that the richness of the illustration is included. You could also hand write these and have the children illustrate them as a good model of writing in the environment.
- Children can draw on this collection when reading on their own or with a friend during independent reading time, or borrow poems from it to take home. As children get to know the book better more poems can be added.
- Children can continue to compile a range of illustrated poetry anthologies drawing on specific themes, linked to interests or the curriculum, or incorporating family favourites or poems, songs and rhymes of cultural or personal significance.

Responding to poetry - creating a poetry box

A poetry box creates a special opportunity to revisit the setting, character or theme of a chosen poem. It might consist of a shoebox containing a range of small toys and inspirational objects. The box itself can be turned into a setting for the story using a variety of collage materials and with sides cut to fold down. Children can use the box to story tell aspects of the narrative shaped by the poem or create another story poem with similar or contrasting setting or characters.

- Poems that work well for this are those with unusual or distinct settings, such as: such as **Mill Street** (P51), **Goalkeeper Blues** (P42), **Snow** (P37) or **Three Witches** (P33). However, it is important to let the children choose and support them in representing their interpretations in poetry box form.
- Make a poetry box for a chosen poem using a shoebox to create a context for the poem. Children can collaborate to decorate it, adding objects which illustrate the poem.
- The box can be used to encourage children to play with the ideas and language of the poem,

to develop word play and talk.

Session 1: Responding to illustration and drama – Freeze-Frame

Children will need time and opportunity to enjoy and respond to the pictures and to talk together about what they contribute to their understanding of the text. As the sessions unfold, there could be opportunities for children to develop their responses by drawing with pen in a similar style to Hilda Offen.

Poem: Rain-Dance (P20)

- Show the children the illustration of the seagulls and the worm without sharing the poem or revealing the title. Ask the children to consider the image:
 - *What is the worm above ground thinking? How do you know? How are the other worms feeling?*
 - *Why did the worm come above ground? What are the birds doing there?*
 - *What do you think will happen next?*
 - *If you were there, what do you think you would you hear? How would the animals move?*
 - *Do you like the illustration? Why? Why not?*
 - *Does it remind you of anything in stories or real life?*
 - *Do you have any questions?*
 - *What do you think the poem will be about?*
- Scribe the children’s responses and ideas around a copy of the illustration, eliciting descriptive vocabulary and helping them to relate their understanding of animal behaviour to their predictions.
- You might like to further support the children’s understanding of viewpoint and language development by creating a freeze-frame of the illustration. Ask small groups of children to take on the roles of worms and seagulls, dramatising the illustrated scene briefly – capturing the sounds, energy and movement of each animal - until you ask them to “freeze!” At this point, the children remain in freeze-frame, voicing their thoughts or feelings when you tap them on the shoulder.

Freeze-frames are still images or a tableau. They can be used to enable groups of children to examine a key event or situation from a story and decide in detail how it could be represented. When presenting the freeze-frame, one of the group could act as a commentator to talk through what is happening in their version of the scene, or individual characters could be asked to speak their thoughts out loud.

Session 2: Responding to poetry - exploring and collecting words

One of the most basic pleasures of poetry is the pleasure of playing with words and language and using all the elements of language to the full, so that the shapes and sounds and rhythms of words are enjoyed as well as their meaning. There is much opportunity in this collection for the children to explore and revel in Hilda Offen’s stunning use of poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia.

Poem: Rain-Dance (P20)

- Read the title 'Rain-Dance' to the children and gather responses to this. How does this support their predictions of what the poem will be about? Refer back to their ideas scribed around the illustration.
- Read the poem aloud, modelling intonation and emphasising the rhythm and movement particular to each verse as the two scenes are played out simultaneously. Ask the children to discuss the pictures that formed in their minds as you read aloud.
- Swiftly re-read aloud, savouring the sounds the poet has created through her use of alliteration and assonance ('*The seagulls are doing their dance again – Wings clasped to their sides, they stare up the street.*') and onomatopoeia ('boom-diddy boom!', 'pitter-pat!', 'Dart!', 'Snap!'). Are there any words and phrases that the children particularly enjoy or like the sound of? Begin to add these to a word collection which could be on display or kept in a book to be revisited at any point.
- Read aloud again, this time with the poem printed and enlarged for the children to tune in to as you do. Ask the children to join in if they feel confident with any parts of the poem. *Why are some words or phrases more memorable than other?* Add these to the word collection. Perhaps the rhyming structure supported participation. The children may begin to dramatise the reading with actions and pick up on the intonation and nuance as you model.
- Ask the children to pick out their favourite words and phrases to add to the collection. Elicit reasons for their choices and encourage them to say them out loud to a partner in doing so.

Session 3: Responding to and performing poetry

The experience of performing poetry enables children to respond to the rhythms, patterns and word play in poems. Giving voice and sound to poetry is an important key to unlocking the meanings and music contained in each poem. It is through reading poetry aloud that the quality of rhyme and verse form, and the power of language can be explored and realised.

In preparing for presenting poetry to an audience, and in the performance itself, children gain deeper understanding of vocabulary meanings, bring their own interpretations to the poem, begin to inhabit characters and reflect more thoughtfully on its message.

Poem: Rain-Dance (P20)

- Share reading the poem aloud, encouraging the children to read along and join in with memorable words and phrases; being careful not to break the flow of the poem but modelling the expression and intonation of the piece.
- Ask the children to discuss the structure of the poem, identifying the way in which the simultaneous scenes are described in alternate verses until the final lines when the worms pop out their heads and 'Dart! Snap! and swallow!'
- Model text marking the poem to give directions for it to be read aloud and performed. How could we group ourselves to add impact to the performance, e.g. one group performing the underground scene, the other performing above ground? How could we use our voices as a

group to best effect? When might silence be most effective? What if we were to add actions or facial expression? Instruments? Mark the text and try out a performance as a class or using a group to demonstrate. How could it be improved? Make further annotations or marks to show these revisions.

- Assign a verse to each group and ask them to mark the text ready for performance. Rehearse and make revisions ready to perform to the class in turn.
- Perform the verses of the poem in order (you will need to perform the poem twice if you have four children to a verse), watching other groups carefully. Evaluate and compare performances, commenting on particularly successful elements in the performances as well as considering new ideas.

Session 4: Responding to poetry - visualising and artwork

Asking children to picture or to 'visualise' a character or place from a story is a way of encouraging them to move into a fictional world. Children can be asked to picture the scene in their mind's eye or 'walk around it' in their imagination. Once they have done so, they can bring it to life by describing it in words or recreating it in drawing or painting.

Poem: Into the Blue (P38)

- Read the poem to the children without showing them the printed poem or the accompanying illustration in the book.
- Ask them to close their eyes and picture the poem in their minds as you read it aloud.
- Read it aloud again. Using sugar paper, crayons or pastels, ask children to draw their own picture of the poem, their own individual interpretation. Read the poem aloud several times to enable the children to add detail to their drawings. They could be encouraged to annotate their drawing with memorable words or phrases from the poem; even choosing to weave their annotations into the fabric of the drawing for added effect, for instance, *'floating, into the blue'* could be written along their image of the string of the balloon.
- Display the pieces of art together with a large print of the poem.
- Talk together about what shaped their picture. Where did their ideas come from; the language in the poem; something from their own lives and experience; books, films or pictures they were reminded of? Are there any similarities in the pieces of art created? Why do we think that is?
- Read aloud the poem again, encouraging the children to join in and tuning them in to the print as you read. Discuss the places that the character sees below her as she floats into the blue. Ask the children to pick out words or phrases that created the precise imagery in their minds and then their artwork, e.g. *'brown fields', 'grass-green sea glitters like sea.'* Establish their understanding of 'the Downs' as children may not have heard of the North or South Downs unless they are local to the South East of England.
- How do they compare to the shape of the printed poem itself. How does the way in which the words and phrases of the poem are organised add to the illustrative effect; impact on our understanding of the sequence of events and the meaning?
- The children could create a small world scene to depict the imagery in the poem.

Extended Session: Composing poetry – list poem

Poetic form is often a big obstacle to children who are beginning to write poetry. This is because a lot of people's ideas of what a poem ought to look like are based on traditional poetry, with its regular verse forms and strict rhyme schemes. It is important that we encourage children to pay attention to the content of their writing rather than forming too rigid an attachment to form, particularly rhyme. You might like children to ignore form completely and have them focus completely on the experience they want to write about; the resulting poem taking its own shape. Another way still is to recognize the importance of pattern in poetry by introducing children to certain forms which are less technically demanding in rhyme and regular metre, but which can be used to shape experience and may even provide an extra stimulus for writing. This collection of poems will support a teacher's repertoire of poetic forms, including talking poems and lists.

Poem: **Into the Blue** (P38)

- In preparing for this piece of creative writing, read aloud a range of books and stories that are similar in theme, such as Mick Inkpen's *The Blue Balloon* or *Tin* by Chris Judge, whereby a character is taken on an airborne journey across a range of settings, or stories in which the character is taken elsewhere on dream induced adventures, such as *Oliver Who Would Not Sleep*.
- It might be interesting to watch the last few minutes (from 30:00) of the film 'The Red Balloon' (1956) as several coloured balloons escape into the sky, skimming the rooftops towards a young boy who gathers them up and flies away with them, much like the character 'Nickel' in the book 'Tin': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2Y1tRBOXfA>.
- Discuss and compare the places visited in these stories and in the poem and make a class collection of the settings upon which the children can draw in their own story making.
- Tell the children that **Into the Blue** was set in Hilda Offen's local area, a place that she knows and can describe well. Ask the children to talk about their own local environment around their school and home and the surrounding area. Draw out any similarities with the settings in the poem, such as towns or fields, woods or sea and anything else that they know about. Perhaps they know of transport in the area like train stations or major roads, perhaps there are tall tower blocks, mountains or hills.
- Engage children and their families in finding out more about the landscape of their locality and surrounding areas by going for walks, and examining maps, books and photographs. Provide plentiful opportunity to explore the bird's eye view involved in the aerial imagery of maps and by employing technology, such as that of Google Maps where the view of the same place can be shifted from map to satellite photograph: www.google.co.uk/maps
- As children become more familiar with their surrounding area, begin to collect words and phrases that they can use to describe each of the areas. You could draw these out of the children as they explore the settings first-hand - employing all their senses - or as they explore photographs or create maps or artwork, strengthening their descriptive vocabulary and understanding of its impact on the imagery it creates for the reader.
- Reflect on the artwork created in the last session and consider how the poet has described

each of the areas, thereby creating precise imagery. How would they describe the motorway; perhaps *'charging through the fields'*? The tower blocks might be described as *'standing guard at the edge of town'*? Begin to collect such descriptive phrases and display them alongside the images of local scenery.

- You might like to take small groups of children outside with a helium filled balloon in a chosen colour that they can release 'into the blue'. As the balloon floats away, ask the children to imagine what they would see below them if they held on to it. They might draw on their knowledge of their area, the settings seen in the poem or other features of the landscape that capture their imagination. Encourage descriptions that engage both the sounds and sights of the scene far below like the gulls that 'circle and scream' in the original poem.
- Ask each of the children to compose a phrase that they think best describes their chosen scene; this could be written, scribed or mediated by an adult on to a strip of paper. Some children may benefit from further support in their descriptions by drawing the scene or revisiting the collected words and phrases on display.
- Ask the children to collaborate to arrange each of their lines to create a group verse - using a simple structure, inspired by Hilda Offen's poem, for example:

*'We're floating into the blue,
Me and my red balloon.
Over the shimmering lake
The tower blocks standing guard
The train rattles and raps away.'*

- The children can collaborate to make simple revisions to their lines so that they flow, reading aloud and re-reading until they feel the verse is cohesive. The children could illustrate their verse in a style similar to Hilda Offen, within a balloon shape or they could create a group story map of sorts, drawing on the geographical features described in their verse.
- Each group could rehearse and perform their verse to the larger group, discussing aspects of their poetry that they enjoyed listening to or performing.
- Children could go on to publish their poetry in a handmade book, exploring effective illustrative techniques in this and other poetry collections, and using their maps, drawings and photographs to enhance the presentation. It would be effective to create a small card balloon, attached to the book by string that can be led through the pages of the book.

Part 2 – Wild Imaginations

Preparatory Sessions: Building vocabulary – first-hand observation and responding to illustration

Poem: Nasturtiums (P10)

- Before beginning this part of the poetry sequence, it is advisable to grow a range of nasturtiums from seed so that the children can see for themselves how and why Hilda Offen has likened the habit of the plant and its growing parts to dinosaurs. This can be linked very well to the Key Stage 1 Science curriculum especially if the children are encouraged to keep a plant diary containing text, photographs and observational drawings with detailed annotations that represent the stages of growth. This knowledge and understanding of the plant, its form, and the way in which it grows will be especially useful in accessing the personification used to create imagery in the poem.
- Show the children the nasturtium plant you have grown and revisit the plant diary that the children have kept. Read out diary extracts and examine photographs and drawings that best describe the stages of the plant's growth. Elicit from the children if any of the parts of the plant, its habit at various stages reminds them of anything in stories or real life. Scribe their ideas in the plant diary or a class poetry journal which could be created from large pieces of sugar paper bound together.
- Show the children the illustration of nasturtium plants. How does it compare to our own drawings in style and detail? Elicit from the children comparisons and further descriptions of the leaves, tendrils, stalks and flowers. You might like to scribe these responses to the illustration too.

Preparatory Sessions: Building vocabulary – small world, art, books and role play

Poem: Nasturtiums (P10)

- It will be beneficial for the children to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of dinosaurs and begin to use and possess the descriptive vocabulary they will later encounter in the poem, **Nasturtiums**. You might do this in a range of contexts:
 - Make provision for the children to play with small world dinosaurs, creating scenes and re-enacting their movement and behaviour. Play alongside the children, extending language and mirroring words and phrases from the poem, such as 'on the march', 'tramped', 'lurk in the undergrowth';
 - If the small world dinosaurs are high quality, children might like to create observational drawings of their favourite dinosaur;
 - Groups of children could be asked to decide how they might sort the dinosaurs for storage. By choosing their own criteria for sorting they will be drawing on a variety of descriptions and in their discussions all children will benefit from clarifying meanings and ideas. Groups could compare the way in which they have each decided to sort the dinosaurs and try out new ideas of their own;
 - Read lots of stories, poems and non-fiction texts in which the children can explore and revisit the language, behaviour and facts associated with dinosaurs, for instance '*Stomp, Chomp, Big Roars. Here come the Dinosaurs*' by Kaye Umansky and Nick Sharratt which boasts a host of interactive action rhymes, begging to be inhabited and performed.
- Show the children some footage of dinosaurs as they are imagined and ask the children to

role play their favourite one, paying attention to the range of movements and sounds they would make. It would be opportune to take the children outside into a garden where they can interact with the plant life surrounding them. Some children could gather together to create a pack, marching and tramping across the ground.

Session 6: Reading aloud – exploring and collecting words

Poem: Nasturtiums(P10)

- Before this session, prepare some large, dark green ‘footprints’ reminiscent of the shape of nasturtium leaves. Stick these in pairs around the classroom as if something has tramped in through the door or window from outside. Arrange some trails of nasturtiums nearby. Be ready to capture the children’s responses as they discover them, perhaps on speech bubble templates or on camera to add to a class display around the poem, **Nasturtiums**.
- As the children enter the classroom have them discover the ‘footprints’. Elicit their ideas about how they might have got there. Children will enjoy playing along with the fantasy that something huge could have broken into the classroom. Elicit from them hypotheses about the footprints. They may draw on their recent experiences and tender the idea that they belong to a herd of dinosaurs. Where do they think the creatures came from? Where have they gone? Encourage the children to spot the trails of nasturtiums left behind in the wake of the footprints and support the children in drawing similarities between the shape of each footprint and the leaves.
- Read the title of the poem, ‘Nasturtiums’ and ask the children to predict what they think the poem will be about. Revisit the illustration which may support their prediction.
- With the plant nearby, start to read aloud the poem, modelling intonation and emphasising the suspense and drama as it plays out, and the plant grows. Ask the children to discuss the pictures that formed in their minds as you read aloud. If the children have not been able to observe the plant’s growth first-hand, it may be useful to show them the time-lapse footage of a Nasturtium plant growing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ehy41Nm7WQU>
- Revisit the first few lines and discuss why the poet speaks of ‘dinosaurs...on the march again’ when the poem is entitled ‘Nasturtiums.’ Why is the poet comparing this plant to dinosaurs? What qualities do the dinosaurs possess that relate to nasturtiums so strongly?
- Swiftly re-read aloud, savouring the use of descriptive language and vocabulary. Are there any words and phrases that the children particularly enjoy or like the sound of? Begin to add these to a word collection which could be on display or kept in a book to be revisited at any point.
- Read aloud again, this time with the illustrated poem printed and enlarged for the children to tune in to as you do. Ask the children to join in if they feel confident with any parts of the poem. *Why are some words or phrases more memorable than others?* Add these to the word collection. The children may begin to dramatise the reading with actions and pick up on the intonation and nuance as you model. *How do the illustrations add to the effect of the poem and its meanings? How would you illustrate this poem?*
- Ask the children to pick out their favourite words and phrases to add to the collection. Elicit

reasons for their choices and encourage them to say them out loud to a partner in doing so.

- You might like the children to illustrate their collection of words and phrases, perhaps publishing them in a handmade book to be revisited.

Session 7: Performing poetry

Poem: *Nasturtiums*(P10)

- Share reading the poem aloud, encouraging the children to read along and join in with memorable words and phrases; being careful not to break the flow of the poem but modelling the expression and intonation of the piece.
- Ask the children to discuss the structure of the poem, identifying the way in which the imagery shifts from verse to verse and the pace and movement of the various dinosaurs and the growing plant.
- Model text marking the poem to give directions for it to be read aloud and performed. How could we use our voices as a group to best effect? When might silence be most effective? What if we were to add actions or facial expression? Instruments? Percussive effects? Mark the text and try out a performance as a class or using a group to demonstrate. How could it be improved? Make further annotations or marks to show these revisions.
- Assign a verse to each group and ask them to mark the text ready for performance. Rehearse and make revisions ready to perform to the class in turn.
- Perform the verses of the poem in order (you will need to perform the poem more than once if you have small groups of children to a verse), watching other groups carefully. Evaluate and compare performances, commenting on particularly successful elements in the performances as well as considering new ideas.

Session 8: Building vocabulary - word collections and shared writing

- Read aloud **Nasturtiums** again and establish which parts of the plant Hilda Offen describes most vividly; the leaves as *'green, veined footprints'*, the buds as *'sharp-beaked, hook-skulled and snarling'*, the bloom *'Thunderer, Flame-throated, electric...ready to gulp down the world.'* Tell the children that they are going to be looking closely at other flowering plants and together decide which parts of the plant they anticipate they will need to look at in detail. As well as this useful guidance, the children might spend some time planning and resourcing 'Plant Spotter' kits to enable them to take photographs, make notes, draw and colour.
- Take the children on a flowering plant* hunt, in the garden, nearby parks and local areas where native plants may be growing – allotments, woodland, meadows, heath land, grassy verges, etc. Children can record what they find with digital cameras and by making observational drawings and annotations. The act of observational drawing will encourage the children to consider more closely all elements of interest in the plant, for instance: colour, tone and variegation in the leaves as well as the flowers, veins, distinctive shapes, etc. Encourage the children to make comparisons with other things to support their descriptions:

- *Do you like this plant? Why/why not?*
- *Does it remind you of anything else? Why?*
- *Does anything puzzle you about the plant?*
- Whilst on site and when the children return to school, they can look up and identify the plants, using books like Charlotte Voake's *Little Guide to Wild Flowers* or helpful websites such as: The Woodland Trust's Nature Detectives http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/download/cards_flowers.htm. In doing so, they may wish to add further detail and description to a plant they found that they find particularly fascinating. They could pair up with other children that have chosen the same plant and compare and combine their photographs, drawings and descriptions, refining orally and in their notes.
- Ask groups of children to create a display for each of the flowering plants chosen and provide opportunity for them to take a gallery walk around each of the displays, adding further comments and descriptions with post-it notes.

**Common flowering plants that may inspire creativity with their interesting habits, colour and form include: Dandelion, Forget-me-nots, Ash, Hawthorn, Foxglove, Ivy, Primrose, Dog Rose, Lily of the Valley, Thistle, Hogweed, Dog Daisy, Cowslip, Honeysuckle, Bluebells and Sweet Pea. Many of these are native and can be found growing wild and certainly in many gardens. It might be worth considering making these bee-friendly plants part of the school planting scheme, given the nature-based Science Curriculum for Key Stage 1. The plants could be grown by the children and their growth recorded in a plant journal, adding an extra layer to the descriptions that lead to the children's own plant poetry.*

Sessions 9-10: Composing poetry – shared writing and publishing

- Choose one of the plants for which the children have studied and created a display. Share reading and read aloud some of the children's descriptions, discussing why they might be particularly effective and how they might be enhanced further:
 - *What pictures do they make in your 'mind's eye'?*
 - *Does this part of the plant remind you of anything else, like an object or animal or a person?*
- You might introduce and teach similes at this point and even metaphor for those children ready to use such poetic devices. The children may naturally personify aspects of the plant with human characteristics although there is no expectation that this is taught explicitly with young children.
- Explain to the children that they could create a poem similar to **Nasturtiums** using their descriptions of their own fascinating plant. Using the children's descriptions, share writing up to six descriptive lines, asking the children to contribute their ideas and demonstrating the editing process. Perhaps Hilda Offen's use of assonance or alliteration would be effective in the class poem.
- It might be useful to write the lines on strips of paper which can be shifted and reorganised to create a more cohesive verse. Model reading aloud and share reading to lift the words off the page and support these revisions. The children will benefit from being taught this planning,

drafting and editing process.

- Share reading the verse aloud, modelling intonation and nuance and savouring the descriptive language and poetic forms the children have drawn on.
- Groups of children can go on to create their own poems about their chosen plant, drawing on their displayed descriptions and using the influence of **Nasturtiums** as inspiration for their word choices. Each child in the group could contribute by composing and writing a line on a strip of paper then work together as a group to organise the lines and make small revisions to enhance the effect of their poem on the reader.
- Ask the children to read aloud and rehearse their recital to the wider group. They could text mark their poem and create a performance reading of their poem, expressing it and emphasising meanings with use of voice, sound effects, music, movement or intonation.
- Children may go on to write their own poem inspired by a particular plant and if they have observed the growth of a plant, use any diary entries made to create sequence and movement within their poem over several verses. You might show the children time-lapse footage of plants unfolding and growing from which they can take inspiration:
- Nasturtiums: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ehy41Nm7WQU>
- Various plants: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzxM4E5I_sc
- Climbing bean: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2RuVxdr0mA>
- Fern: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c9Zi3WFVRc>
- Show the children how to create a simple zigzag book in which they can publish their poem, presenting the text neatly and considering the contribution of their illustration on the message of their poem.



Broadening experience of poetry - creating an anthology - flowering plants

The kind of poetry books children are most familiar with till be anthologies, and these can take many forms. Putting an anthology together, as an audio collection or in book form, is a very pleasurable activity which can go on the whole period of time when the class is working on a theme. It may also be a good opportunity for calligraphy, as children write their chosen poems out themselves. Or you may want to produce the anthologies in typed or printed form for the book corner. As children complete their anthologies they have to take decisions about how the poems should be juxtaposed, and what order they should come in. Children might be encouraged to write a commentary to go between the poems, explaining why each one was chosen and how it connects with the theme.

- The class could also go on to create an anthology of plant poems, taking poems from a range of poetry books and adding to their own anthology.
- Conduct a library session during which the children are able to browse the poetry section and

make choices as to the content of their own anthology. Try to provide poetry collections that the children choose from rather than ready-made anthologies so they are making genuine choices and the children's anthology feels more authentic.

- Children can make handmade books, e-books or publish their anthologies in a prepared journal that can be illustrated and the poems word-processed or handwritten neatly for presentation.
- Provide the children with a range of art materials and be prepared to model techniques employed by their favourite illustrators as this is as much a part of the anthology as the poem.

Drawing the learning together

- To draw together all the work done in this unit, hold a discussion about the collection as a whole.
 - *What are your most memorable poems? Why?*
 - *What have you learnt about poetry that you didn't know before?*
 - *Would you like to read more poetry after reading 'Blue Balloons and Rabbits Ears'? Why? Why not?*
- If you were to write a letter to the poet, what would you say about the collection? What questions would you ask her?
- You might like to find out more about Hilda Offen's other work, even invite her in to visit the children.